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LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD IN THE WAR ON DRUGS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The “war on drugs” has been a rhetorical and political challenge to do something about this nation’s drug problem. The current drug threat and the drug traffickers’ center of gravity warrant a reassessment of national security priorities and the development of a coherent, long term strategic objective. The principles of objective, unity of effort, legitimacy and perseverance as they pertain to military operations other than war provide a framework that focus unilateral and multilateral efforts against the enemy’s centers of gravity. In this context, the US military has not applied all necessary means authorized by the National Command Authority to combat the drug problem. In its role of detection and monitoring drug activities and supporting law enforcement agencies, the military has not depleted the availability of illicit drugs in the US, leading some exponents to suggest that the military should divorce itself from the drug war. The risks inherent in this implicit Fabian approach to the international theater of the drug war demand synchronous engagement of the five tenets to the National Drug Control Strategy. Several initiatives are proposed, but this does not infer a “silver bullet” solution exists to neutralize the drug threat. The US military is but one among a myriad of players engaged in the drug war, and these players must play as a team and stay in the game in order to level the playing field in the war on drugs.

## **Introduction**

The war on drugs was formally announced by President Ronald Regan on October 2, 1982 when he stated, “The Federal Government is waging a planned, concerted campaign [against drugs]...we've taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag....”<sup>1</sup> The desired end state of this call to battle was reflected in the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 which set forth a policy to eliminate drug abuse by 1995. President Bush’s 1989 National Drug Control Strategy mustered the Department of Defense into the war on drugs. This Strategy designated the Department of Defense as lead agency in detecting and monitoring drug trafficking in the transit zone while supporting counterdrug law enforcement agencies. More recently, President Clinton’s “get tough” policy on drugs was manifest in his designation of retired General McCaffrey as Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Unfortunately, these policy road marks do not portend a cohesive mapping of our nation’s drug control strategy. The milestone to eliminate drug abuse in the US by 1995 was mollified by the 1990 National Drug Control Strategy which simply called for “a reduction in the level of drug abuse in America.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, President Clinton shifted the priority of the drug war from number three to number 29 on the White House list of 29 national security priorities.<sup>3</sup> In effect, the rhetoric charged “war on drugs” falls under the guise of political correctness. But political correctness does not connote political will-- the essence of the US center of gravity in the war on drugs. This shortcoming is reflected in the following statement issued in 1995 by Thomas A. Constantine, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Agency:

“One of the things that has never occurred in this country under any political leadership at any level is a real war on drugs or a real assault. We have never fully committed ourselves.”<sup>4</sup>

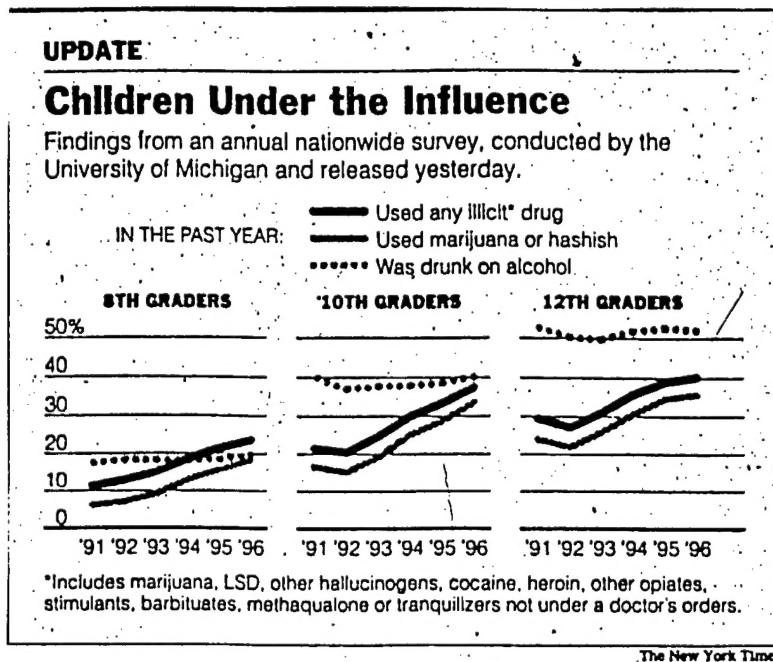
Recent trends reflect that the US is losing the war on drugs.<sup>5</sup> To reverse this trend it will be necessary for the US to level the playing field and enhance freedom of action in the war on drugs.

The premise of this paper is that a reassessment of the principles unique to military operations other than war (MOOTW), particularly objective, unity of effort, legitimacy and perseverance at the strategic and operational levels provide a framework to more decisively engage the enemy in the war on drugs. The scope of this paper will be limited to the drug war in the South and Central American theater of operations.

### Current Threat

Figure 1 depicts a rise in adolescent drug abuse over the past four years, and calls into question the effectiveness of the drug education program.

**Figure 1**



Moreover, the attitude towards drug abuse among high school students has grown more cavalier, with only 60% of the population viewing drug use as a great risk today, compared to 78% in 1991.<sup>6</sup> In addition, over 250 thousand Americans are serving time for drug related violations and drug use has been cited in association with over one-third of all violent crimes.<sup>7</sup> Also, approximately 10,000

drug users contract the AIDS virus each year, and drug use accounts for one-third of all AIDS cases. Finally, nearly 100,000 Americans have died as a result of drug related activities and costs associated with domestic drug abuse are approaching \$300 billion during the decade of the 1990's.<sup>8</sup>

These statistics portray the US losing in a war of attrition against the drug problem. The American public is sensitive to the scope of the drug problem which is reflected in a 1995 survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. When asked to rank "very important" foreign policy goals, 85% of the respondents placed "stopping the flow of drugs into the US" at the top of the list.<sup>9</sup>

The domestic threat imposed by illicit drugs warrants a reprioritization of national security interests. On average, 30 Americans die each day from drug related activities, but this statistic does not engender the same degree of political support and public outcry following the bombing of the World Trade Center which killed nine people, or the Oklahoma City bombing, killing 168. At the strategic level, the war on drugs must be viewed with the same enmity as weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

The drug industry has also threatened national security in the international environment. For example, the Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARC) have gained cartel status in Colombia and use well armed and violent tactics to support the production and transportation of cocaine.<sup>10</sup> The FARC was responsible for killing over 100 Colombian army personnel in August, 1996, and currently hold six American citizens hostage. The situation in Mexico also appears bleak in DEA Administrator Thomas Constantine's following testimony in March 1996:

"Drug trafficking organizations in Mexico have become so wealthy and so powerful over the years that they can rival legitimate governments for influence and control."<sup>11</sup>

To expound on the Colombia and Mexico connection, Colombia produces 80% of the 300 metric tons of cocaine consumed in the US on an annual basis, while approximately 70% of the cocaine arriving in the US comes across the Mexican border.<sup>12</sup>

Drug trafficking has also penetrated government institutions in the Caribbean, including Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis, Aruba, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.<sup>13</sup> The focal point of narcotic trafficking in the eastern Caribbean transit zone is Puerto Rico. By virtue of her commonwealth status, Puerto Rico enjoys the same benefits as all other US ports of entry. Short of directed intelligence, drugs arriving in Puerto Rico are readily transshipped to the US mainland among the high volume of legitimate commercial cargo. The trappings of this cottage industry are manifest in Puerto Rico having the highest per capita murder rate in the US, with two-thirds of the 850 murders in 1995 being drug related.<sup>14</sup>

#### **National Drug Control Strategy**

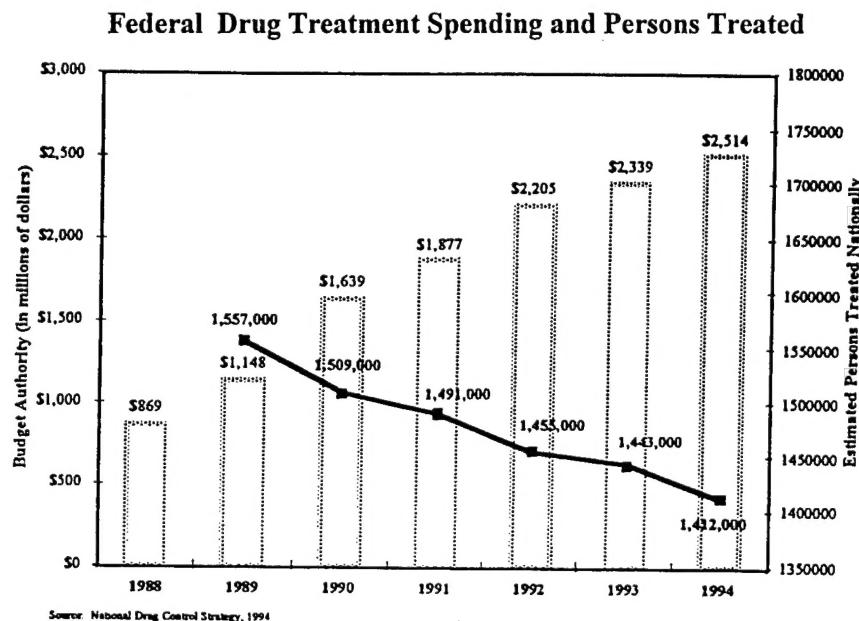
To meet these domestic and international threats, the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy sets forth the following five goals:

- 1) Educate and enable America's youth to reject drugs.
- 2) Increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crimes.
- 3) Reduce health and social costs attributed to illegal drug use.
- 4) Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
- 5) Break foreign and domestic sources of supply.

\$15 billion have been allocated to fight the drug war in FY97. With over 50 federal agencies participating in the drug war, a significant percentage of this budget is absorbed by infrastructure. \$1.8 billion or 12% of the annual budget has been allocated to strategic goals number 4 and 5, despite the fact that US policy has called for greater emphasis on international efforts in drug source countries.<sup>15</sup> (\$400 million have been allocated to eradication efforts and host-nation support, while \$1.4 billion have been allocated to interdiction.) In effect, the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy places greater emphasis on domestic programs including drug treatment. Despite increased funding

for drug treatment programs, Figure 2 portrays that the number of slots available for treatment has steadily declined.

**Figure 2**



### US Military Counterdrug Strategy

The US military strategy is distilled from the President's National Drug Control Strategy and policy guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense. Military strategy and counterdrug missions are contained in Joint Pub 3-07.4. It is worth noting the strategy and missions of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) contained in Joint Pub 3-07.4. After all, with the expansion of SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility to encompass the Caribbean Sea in June 1997, the Andean Ridge source countries as well as the Central American and Caribbean transit zones will come under the purview of SOUTHCOM.

SOUTHCOM's counterdrug strategy is to work with other federal agencies to eliminate the production of illicit drugs in source countries and prevent the transshipment of drugs into the US.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) which also have a pervasive drug threat within their area of responsibility, only SOUTHCOM's strategy of

“elimination” and “prevention” strikes at the enemy’s center of gravity. (USACOM and USPACOM strategies are similar and mission focused with emphasis on supporting law enforcement agencies and detecting and monitoring drug related activity.) Strategic alignment and coherent military objectives are therefore required among the regional CINCs to wage the war on drugs. Given the political objectives to shield American frontiers and break foreign sources of supply, B.H. Liddel Hart reminds us, “The military objective should be governed by political objectives, subject to the basic condition that policy does not demand what is militarily impossible.”<sup>17</sup> In keeping with the concept of MOOTW, the national policy and military objective must work in concert to neutralize the drug traffickers’ centers of gravity.

### **Enemy’s Center of Gravity**

The key aspects of the drug traffickers’ centers of gravity are 1) an inelastic demand for illicit drugs; 2) cheap and extensive supply of raw materials (i.e. coca); 3) profit incentives; and 4) multiple lines of operation for drug transshipments.

One only has to look at the three-fold increase in the price of cigarettes coupled with an aggressive anti-smoking campaign over the past 10 years to appreciate the inelastic property of demand with respect to addictive substances. Nevertheless, one of the tenets of the supply side of the drug war is that reducing the availability of illicit drugs will drive up prices, drive down demand and force drug users out of the market. In addition, drug education programs have received mixed signals from the previous Surgeon General, Jocelyn Elders, alluding to the merits of legalizing drugs, as well as from recent legislation authorizing the medical use of marijuana in the states of California and Arizona. Moreover, President Clinton’s admitted drug use has diluted his leadership role in saying, “No” to drugs.<sup>18</sup> These US critical vulnerabilities combined with the fact that drug prices, quantity and quality have remained nearly constant since 1988 have only bolstered the demand aspect of the enemy’s center of gravity.

The enemy's raw materials include 215,000 hectares (one hectare equals 2.47 acres) or 830 square miles of coca under cultivation in the source countries of Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. Colombia also has approximately 30,000 hectares of opium poppies under cultivation. The drug economy employs approximately 500,000 people in Bolivia or about 20% of its work force.<sup>19</sup> There are also about 200,000 coca farmers in Peru, and the coca growers have become a political constituency capable of creating political upheaval in response to government sponsored eradication programs.<sup>20</sup> This does not obviate the practicality of eradication, per se. Opium eradication efforts in Mexico from 1975 to 1979 reduced Mexico's heroin production by two-thirds.<sup>21</sup> On the cocaine battle front, intelligence resources can readily detect where the coca is being grown, but adequate means have not been applied to eradication which is often relegated to the destruction of one acre per day using weed eaters.<sup>22</sup> To date, the cumulative eradication quota established by US policy over the past 7 years has not approximated the acreage of cocaine cultivation needed to satisfy US demand for one year. A more robust eradication program could weaken this center of gravity.

Production, smuggling and money laundering costs incurred by drug traffickers amount to about 12% of the price a US consumer will pay for cocaine.<sup>23</sup> This inflated profit margin combined with the fact that source countries produce approximately 780 metric tons of cocaine on an annual basis enable drug traffickers to absorb law enforcement interdictions with minimal impact on the positive cash flow. The profitability of illicit drugs has stimulated corruption and compromised law enforcement efforts. For example, last year Colombian President Samper was implicated with the drug cartels, leading to US decertification of Colombia under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Also, General Rebollo, Mexico's drug czar, was recently dismissed for collaborating with the Mexican drug barons. The profit motive has also bolstered the resolve of coca farmers who earn up to \$2600 per hectare from coca cultivation, compared to the earnings of \$600 - \$800 per hectare for cultivating the most profitable, legitimate crops--oranges and avocados.<sup>24</sup> Finally, profitability

enables the drug traffickers to reconstitute their forces at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

If a coca farmer accepts an offer to voluntarily eradicate his coca crops, other farmers will take up the slack. Similarly, the elimination of the Medellin cartel led to the emergence of the Cali cartel with no disruption in the supply of illegal drugs. Perhaps the only critical vulnerability in the drug traffickers' cash flow scheme is the money laundering process.

The drug traffickers have enjoyed freedom of action while exploiting multiple lines of operation for the transshipment of drugs into the US. Interdiction efforts have been analogous to squeezing a balloon. Once interdiction pressure is exerted along a given route, the drug traffickers shift to the path of least resistance and alter their line of operations using a combination of air, land and sea modes of transshipment. There are also enclaves for these lines of operation in the form of foreign territorial seas among the nations that ring the Caribbean basin.

The 2000 mile common border with Mexico and the drug traffickers' accessibility to Puerto Rico are the most poignant US vulnerabilities. Also, there is a blind spot in the relocatable over-the-horizon backscatter radar (ROTHR) array along the eastern Pacific corridor which has been exploited by enemy aircraft. This shortcoming may be alleviated once a third ROTHR sites becomes operational in Puerto Rico during FY97. Nevertheless, ROTHR has attained some modicum of success in channeling air lines of operation from the eastern Caribbean and Florida to the western Caribbean, eastern Pacific, and Mexico. This attributes in part to the fact that 70% of the cocaine destined for the US enters via the Mexican border. To complicate matters, over 400 million people, 120 million cars and 10 million containers pass through 301 points of US entry in a given year.<sup>25</sup> US Customs have relied exclusively upon human intelligence (HUMINT) to target drug shipments commingled with legitimate cargo. To attack the enemy's center of gravity along multiple lines of operation it will be necessary to eliminate enclaves in foreign territorial seas and airspace while

expanding the HUMINT network and developing new detection technologies to discriminate illicit drugs from legitimate cargo.

In retrospect, the enemy's centers of gravity have not been threatened and the supply of illicit drugs continues to outstrip US demand. There is solace to be found in the words of one journalist who comprises the litany of media representatives opposed to US military and federal agency efforts against the supply side of the drug war.

"The failure of American efforts to curtail the flow of drugs into the United States should not cause us to abandon the effort at a time when drug traffic is growing rapidly."<sup>26</sup>

A reassessment of political and military objectives within the framework of MOOTW is therefore necessary to alter the momentum in the war on drugs.

### **MOOTW Principles**

Former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger recently stated, "A clear military objective --not just a vague injunction to 'stop the drug traffickers'--must be specified."<sup>27</sup> A synchronous campaign against drugs must be implemented that encompasses the following MOOTW principles --objective, unity of effort, legitimacy and perseverance.

### **Objective**

The political objectives contained in the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy will continue to languish as long as the war on drugs remains number 29 on the White House list of 29 national security priorities. Clarity of mission has been obfuscated by political rhetoric and vacillating emphasis on the demand and supply aspects of the drug war. The impact of cutting support for interdiction in the transit zone and source countries in order to defray domestic drug enforcement and treatment programs is tantamount to a Fabian strategy and a dangerous game of waiting for the problems associated with drug abuse to come to the US. Ostensibly, the war on drugs has been waged on the enemy's terms. In order to shield America's frontier from the drug threat and break

foreign sources of supply, the US must simultaneously engage all aspects of the enemy's centers of gravity on a multilateral and unilateral basis. A coherent strategic objective backed with a strong political will are essential in attaining unity of effort.

### **Unity of Effort**

There is some truth to the adage, "We have met the enemy and he is us" with respect to unity of effort in the war on drugs. Multilateral unity of effort has been frustrated by corruption, sovereignty issues and fluctuations in US funding for host nation interdiction efforts.<sup>28</sup> For example, a reduction in the US economic commitment to the countries of the eastern Caribbean has been received as a breach in trust after those countries devoted larger portions of their meager budgets to fight drug trafficking.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, the national record is replete with examples where unity of effort failed among the more than 50 federal agencies participating in the war on drugs. The Department of Agriculture failed to support an initiative proposed by the US Agency for International Development to introduce soybeans as an alternate crop to coca in Bolivia because the crop would compete on the international market with US soybeans.<sup>30</sup> Also, there is dissension in the federal court system, and court officials estimate that approximately 50 of the nation's 680 federal judges refuse to hear drug cases.<sup>31</sup> Political in-fighting is also endemic. The Chairman of the House of the International Relations Committee recently blocked the shipment of 30 Huey helicopters to Mexico that were to be show-cased during President Clinton's official visit on May 6, 1997. The helicopters were to be used for Mexican interdiction efforts, and the timing of their delivery was to coincide with President Clinton's renewed alliance with Mexico in the war on drugs.<sup>32</sup> Evidently the shipment was blocked

because the State Department failed to meet the delivery schedule of 12 Hueys that had been promised to the Colombian National Police.

Without unity of effort, the war on drugs will continue to play out like a sequel to the novel, Catch-22. Opportunities exist for coalition building to bolster multilateral unity of effort, while it is incumbent upon the National Command Authority and General McCaffrey as Director of the ONDCP to provide strategic direction and unity of effort among the numerous federal agencies engaged in the war on drugs.

### **Coalition Building**

It is worth noting that the US demand for cocaine absorbs less than one-third of the world's cocaine production and less than four per cent of the global heroin production. Recently, the World Health Organization announced that drug abuse is emerging as a public health and social problem in Central and Eastern European countries.<sup>33</sup> The drug problem is spreading at epidemic proportions throughout the source and transit zone countries as illicit drugs replace cash as legal tender for services rendered. Hence, there are a number of shareholders with a common interest in the war against drugs. This combined interest may be used to thwart money laundering activities and strike at the enemy's profit based center of gravity. To this end, the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances criminalizes activities associated with money laundering. To date, over 100 nations have ratified the Convention. Several loopholes exist within the Convention, and there is no requirement for banks to scrutinize origins of cash deposits. A multinational banking regulatory body is therefore needed to further impinge upon money laundering.<sup>34</sup> Also, the UN should threaten economic sanctions against those members who have not ratified the Convention and serve as enclaves to illicit cash flows.

The UN Drug Control Program (UNDCP) which funds eradication efforts in source countries is in need of revitalization and unity of effort. Currently, the UNDCP provides \$70 million in

funding with a mere \$2.2 million allocated to eradication efforts in South America. Support for more extensive eradication programs in the Western Hemisphere has been stymied by Italy, a major contributor to the UNDCP, who does not view the drug industry in South America as a regional priority.<sup>35</sup>

The Organization of American States (OAS) could also be leveraged in a coalition against drug traffickers. As the world's oldest regional organization, the OAS has expanded its charter principles to include fighting drug trafficking and abuse.<sup>36</sup> The 35 members of the OAS comprise all of the drug source, production and transshipment nations in the Caribbean and in Central and South America. During the Summit of the Americas convened in December, 1994, one of the agenda items was to enlist the OAS in challenging money launderers and drug traffickers.<sup>37</sup> In order for the OAS to muster such a challenge, US economic, intelligence and military assistance is critical. For example, all of the Central American countries have a drug control strategy, but lack the technical, financial and human resources necessary to conduct an efficient drug interdiction program.<sup>38</sup>

Host nation support also contributes to multilateral unity of effort against illicit drugs. One of the dilemmas confronting Andean source countries is that their national security priorities are so overwhelming (i.e. the Shining Path insurgency in Peru and the Peru/Ecuador conflict) that these potential allies do not share US interests in fighting the drug war.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, US financial and military training assistance have been successful in melding the highly reputable and effective Colombian National Police (CNP).<sup>40</sup> Over the past two years, the CNP have apprehended all of the main leaders of the Cali cartel, expanded Colombia's drug eradication program, and destroyed over 600 cocaine processing laboratories.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, US financial aid to Colombia has been scaled back, thereby curtailing CNP operations, due to Colombia's decertification in March, 1996, under the Foreign Assistance Act. This policy decision was made after it was determined that Colombian President Samper had received campaign funding from the Cali cartel. Meanwhile, President

Samper has exploited the decertification issue and unilateral action by the US to rally popular support. Although the decision to decertify Colombia was intended to topple the Samper regime, it appears to be having a reverse effect.

There is a provision under the Foreign Assistance Act where US vital national interests may preclude decertification. Bolivia and Peru have retained their certification under this exemption. As a result, unity of effort has prevailed among US and Peruvian military forces and law enforcement agencies during Operation LASER STRIKE. One segment of this operation has US technicians operating radar sites in the Peruvian jungle and coordinating the interdiction of coca flights by the Peruvian air force.<sup>42</sup>

In retrospect, it may be prudent for US policy makers to renew the certification of Colombia under the vital national interest clause while gathering support among Colombia's peers in the OAS to exert pressure on the Samper regime. After all, the CNP has demonstrated the ends to strike at the drug traffickers' centers of gravity, but lack the means to alter the course of the drug war. Meanwhile, US excess defense articles that were approved for use by the Colombian army in support of the CNP have been held in abeyance.

Multilateral unit of effort could also be enhanced by reassessing the Foreign Military Financing Program (FMFP). Key members of the OAS attempting to fight the drug traffickers are in the same predicament as the Allied coalition who relied upon the Lend Lease Act to wage World War II. Currently, Israel and Egypt combined absorb the lion's share of all FMFP allocations. A strategic rudder command at the congressional level is needed to reapportion FMFP funding and thereby foster an allied effort in the war against drugs.

#### **US Federal Unity of Effort**

Perhaps the greatest detriment to unity of effort among US federal agencies is that the war on drugs has only been an intermittent contact on the political radar screen. Priorities have shifted

among the supply versus demand side of the drug war with each iteration of the National Drug Control Strategy. Arguably, the impetus behind the appointment of General McCaffrey as Director of the ONDCP was to bolster President Clinton's reputation and re-election bid in the face of Republican criticism toward the downward trend in the drug war. With the election behind us, strategic leadership is essential in attaining unity of effort, and General McCaffrey possesses this quality as the former Commander-in-Chief of SOUTHCOM. Specifically, General McCaffrey must develop a long range strategy that provides continuous and synchronous pressure on the enemy's centers of gravity. Also, initiatives should be explored to apply military elements in the drug source countries under the veil of Foreign Internal Defense. The National Military Strategy would complement such an initiative as reflected in the following excerpt.

“The Armed Forces, working in close cooperation with law enforcement agencies, will use all means necessary authorized by the President and the Congress to halt the flow of illegal drugs into this country.”<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, the Armed Forces have not used all necessary means in fighting the drug war. The National Command Authority and General McCaffrey hold the final linchpin to unite political policy with military strategy.

At the operational level, synergy among the federal agencies has been an evolving process and is the hallmark of the long standing Joint Inter Agency Task Forces Four, Five and Six. The missions of these Joint Inter Agency Task Forces include detection and monitoring of drug trafficking activity and integration of C4I among the various counterdrug operation centers. It is conceivable that this operational unity of effort could be mirror imaged in a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) program led by a joint task force. Cooperation among the Department of State and Department of Defense at the Chief of Mission and CINC levels respectively is therefore necessary to expand upon such operations as LASER STRIKE in order to compromise the enemy's lines of

operations. The key role of the Department of State is to provide legitimacy in executing the international component of the National Drug Control Strategy.

### **Legitimacy**

Progress has been made in legitimately reducing the number of enclaves along the drug traffickers' lines of operations. To date, there are 9 standing counterdrug bilateral agreements among OAS members authorizing US law enforcement agencies to enter into foreign territorial seas and airspace to interdict drug laden vessels and aircraft. A concerted effort is being made to expand coverage of these bilateral agreements to include Haiti, Barbados, and perhaps most significant, Colombia.<sup>44</sup>

US mobile training teams in host countries have also contributed to the legitimacy of the counterdrug mission. The human rights issue is a critical path and prerequisite to US foreign assistance. In this regard, US mobile training teams are essential in establishing a humanitarian protocol among host nation law enforcement agencies. It may be possible to expand upon this training by modifying joint exercises such as UNITAS to focus on the international drug threat in lieu of traditional deep water naval missions.

An amendment to the Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention which recognizes international drug trafficking in a similar light as piracy could bolster legitimacy of multilateral interdiction of drug traffickers on the high seas. With respect to piracy, the 1982 LOS Convention stipulates that, “[A]ll States shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in the repression of piracy on the high seas or any other place outside the jurisdiction of any State.”<sup>45</sup> At the tactical level, law enforcement agencies must seek flag state approval prior to searching and seizing suspected drug smugglers operating on the high seas whose nation is not party to a counterdrug bilateral agreement. Delays in attaining flag state approval have enabled drug smugglers to scuttle their illicit cargo and avoid arrest.

Eradication of drugs in source countries raises one of the more sensitive legitimacy issues due to economic and environmental concerns. Over two-thirds of the world's coca originates in the Upper Huallaga Valley, and theoretically, this coca could be eradicated in less than 10 days through an aggressive aerial spraying program.<sup>46</sup> Although environmentally safe and effective herbicides such as glyphosate have been developed, the plight of the economically displaced coca farmers remains problematic. Colombia recently stepped up its eradication program with a pledge to wipe out more than 100,000 acres of coca and opium poppies during 1996.<sup>47</sup> A revolt by coca farmers in the impoverished south forced a reduction in the eradication program. In response, President Samper recently signed a \$90 million loan with the Inter American Development Bank which will offer loans and technical assistance to farmers and enable them to switch from coca to legitimate crops.<sup>48</sup>

To legitimately support foreign eradication programs, a decision must be rendered by the National Security Council along the following guidelines pertaining to FID.

- a. Eradication must support US national interests.
- b. The host nation must be capable of effectively using US assistance.
- c. The host nation must request US assistance.<sup>49</sup>

Legitimacy of FID could also be enhanced through diplomatic efforts to enlist support among OAS members and by providing financial and military assistance to and conducting psychological operations in the host nation.

Atrocities committed by narco-guerillas such as the FARC may facilitate the legitimacy of FID initiatives. Despite Colombia's decertification, US security assistance in the form of military equipment has been forthcoming in response to FARC activities that have forced local police to abandon 56 small towns.<sup>50</sup>

In summation, substantial efforts have been made to enhance counterdrug freedom of action through legitimacy, while opportunities remain to expand upon this legitimacy. Given this legitimate

foothold and evolving unity of effort, perseverance is required to erode the drug traffickers' centers of gravity.

### **Perseverance**

Perseverance in the drug war is perhaps best reflected in the following testimony of Robert S. Gelbard, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

"I wish I could say there was a quick and easy solution to the problems of drug trade and transnational crime, but we all know that there is not. Our battle must be measured in years, not days."<sup>51</sup>

Several tenets of the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy, particularly a ten-year federal commitment supported by five year budgets complement the concept of continuity of effort. Consistent funding across the spectrum of counterdrug programs must also flow from a coherent, long term counterdrug strategy.

Measures of effectiveness reflecting steady, incremental progress toward the strategic objective are intrinsic to perseverance. Over the past seven years, the strategic objective has been to reduce the supply of drugs, and measures of success have dwelled upon kilograms of drugs seized and acres of coca crops destroyed. Despite purported measures of success, there is no strategic correlation between these measures and the ability of the drug traffickers to meet the US drug demand. For example, 230 metric tons of cocaine were seized worldwide in 1995, while cocaine production was estimated to be about 780 metric tons. US annual demand for cocaine is estimated to be about 300 metric tons, and consequently the remaining 550 metric tons that had not been seized were more than sufficient to meet US demand. A similar measurement error is applied to the eradication program, where the number of acres eradicated are counted, but not the number of acres replanted.<sup>52</sup>

The US military's role in detection and monitoring and supporting law enforcement agencies does not lend itself to strategic, quantifiable measures of effectiveness. The Department of Defense

is but one cog in the intricate counterdrug program, and the implied measure of ineffectiveness, that is, the domestic supply of drugs exceeding domestic demand, does not reflect the military contribution to the war on drugs. Nevertheless, some exponents have focused upon this measure of ineffectiveness to suggest that the military should divorce itself from the drug war. Accordingly, measures of effectiveness must be reassessed to retain political support for military perseverance in the drug war.

In a letter dated February 14, 1997, to the US General Accounting Office, the ONDCP has reported that it has begun to develop measures of effectiveness that are tied to the National Drug Control Strategy and counterdrug missions of US federal agencies. Breaking foreign sources of illicit drugs implies a more robust military posture. Ultimately, the ONDCP's new performance measures will capture the level of effort contributed by the US military and guarantee continued military engagement in the drug war.

### **Conclusion**

The current drug threat has been exacerbated by the fact that the drug traffickers' centers of gravity have remained inviolate. In its support role, the US military has not been engaged in a true war on drugs, nor has the military applied all necessary means to combat the drug nemesis. A renewed and more robust military effort is required to shield America's air, land and sea frontiers from the drug threat and break foreign sources of supply. The principles of MOOTW--directing military operations toward a "...clearly defined, decisive and obtainable objective,"<sup>53</sup> unity of effort, legitimacy and perseverance provide a framework where military leverage may be legitimately applied in a synchronous unilateral and multilateral effort involving US federal agencies and coalition forces.

Some of these efforts include a more extensive eradication program with UNDCP and host nation support; expanding the number of counterdrug bilateral agreements to broaden freedom of

action in foreign territorial seas and airspace; a robust HUMINT network and technological advances to enhance the detection of illicit drugs at US points of entry; leveraging OAS support in the counterdrug effort backed with US financial, military and C4I assistance; continuation of the US mobile team training programs to ensure human rights prerequisites are met by foreign law enforcement agencies; and security assistance and FID initiatives in drug source countries. This list is not all inclusive and does not infer a “silver bullet” solution exists to our nation’s complex drug problem.

The fact remains that the lack of a coherent strategic objective has obfuscated clarity of mission and constrained freedom of action, resulting in a drug war that has been fought on the enemy’s terms. There is a similarity between weapons of mass destruction and the havoc that has plagued the American populace from the scourge of illicit drugs. One difference is that significantly more American casualties during this decade have been attributed to the latter. As each day passes, another 30 Americans will perish from drug related activities. The time is long overdue for this nation to align ends and means to physically vice symbolically engage in a war against drugs. This policy direction must come from the National Command Authority. The National Command Authority must demonstrate strategic leadership to provide synergy among the various players in the drug war, as well as the political will and perseverance to keep these players in the game. With this strategic guidance, operational players will have the wherewithal to level the playing field in the war on drugs.

## ENDNOTES

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